

**COUNTY FISCAL MANUAL****Section 4.7.0****4.7.0 CELLULAR TELEPHONES AND OTHER WIRELESS DATA DEVICES USAGE POLICY****4.7.1 Description of Cellular Telephones and Other Wireless Data Devices Usage Policy**

The usage policy for the County's cellular telephones and other wireless data devices addresses: who may have a County cellular telephone or other wireless data device; when it may be used; management responsibilities to monitor and check usage and cost; and reimbursement for personal usage. This policy applies to handheld portable and vehicle installed cellular telephones, as well as other wireless data devices.

Cellular telephones and other wireless data devices (such as pagers, mobile hot spots, air cards, etc.) issued and paid for by the County must be assigned based on operational need and not employee level. The department head or his/her designee must limit assignment of such devices to circumstances in which the employee's use of a non-cellular telephone or other form of communication is inadequate to meet departmental needs. Examples of such circumstances include a frequent, urgent need to contact the employee, a finding that employees can more efficiently and productively complete their duties by using a cellular telephone or other wireless data device, or circumstances where an employee's personal safety may be at risk if the employee does not have a cellular telephone. The use of County-issued cellular telephones and other wireless data devices is to be minimized, and conventional communication means are to be used when practical and more cost effective. Department management must control County-issued cellular telephones and other wireless data devices usage and cost through monthly bill reviews and annual needs evaluation. Personal usage made by employees from County-issued cellular telephones or other wireless data devices may require reimbursement as referenced below in Section 4.7.3.

**4.7.2 Internal Controls Over Cellular Telephones and Other Wireless Data Devices**

The County standard for departmental internal controls over the use of County-issued cellular telephones and other wireless data devices is as follows:

**4.7.2.1 Selection and Approval**

- Costs for cellular telephones and other wireless data devices are to be monitored and controlled as part of each department's operating budget.

- Services for cellular telephones and other wireless data devices are to be acquired at rates available through County master agreements negotiated by the Internal Services Department.
- Departments should choose the most cost-effective pricing plan for the employee. Unnecessary cost features (such as international calling, and downloads of recreational programs) should be disabled to prevent accidental charges.
- Assignments for cellular telephones and other wireless data devices are to be individually justified and approved by an appropriate level of departmental management.
- Pricing plan selection should be determined solely based on anticipated minutes/data usage for business purpose and assume zero personal use by employee.
- Multiple use or pool phones must be controlled by a specific individual assigned responsibility for controlling use of each pool phone, through a) logging use by each individual with access to the phone and/or b) utilization of electronic coding of caller and calls such as in "Call Accounting" programs, when available from the service provider.

#### **4.7.2.2 Monitoring and Reporting**

- The department head or his/her designee must, at least annually, re-evaluate individual cellular telephone and other wireless data device assignments to certify continued need. This evaluation should also include a review of the pricing plan to ensure the most cost-effective plan continues to be used. For example, the department should not be paying for a plan that offers 2,000 anytime minutes a month if the employee does not use more than 500 minutes a month on County business, and vice versa.
- A detailed departmental inventory of cellular telephones and other wireless data devices must be maintained at all times for each device which includes at a minimum: identification code (e.g., serial number), state of activation, service provider, plan type, account number, user assignment, user identification number, and assignment location.
- Cellular telephone and other wireless data device bills and usage must be reviewed by administrative staff, or distributed through immediate supervisors to users within one month of receipt.
- Any bill that exceeds plan rates must be reviewed by individual users to verify that the charges are correct and identify any personal usage/calls. Using the guidelines in Section 4.7.3 below, employees must reimburse the County for the

cost of all reimbursable personal usage/calls within 30 days of bill receipt. Recurring patterns of excessive personal usage should be documented and may result in disciplinary action.

- Department management must review verified bills to ensure that usage is appropriate and the cost of personal usage is being reimbursed, if required under Section 4.7.3. The appropriate level of management must review all cellular telephone and other wireless data device bills over a normal usage amount as determined by the department head.
- Inappropriate call patterns that may indicate misuse of the device by unauthorized individuals ("cloning" or stolen numbers) must be reported to the service provider.
- Security measures available through service providers must be considered as a means of additional protection. For example, electronic coding of devices to prevent use unless a personal identification number (PIN) is entered by the user.
- Departments must establish internal controls to ensure that departmental/County policies for use of cellular telephones and other wireless data devices are followed.
- Departments must maintain documentation of cellular telephone and other wireless data device expenditures consistent with Auditor-Controller expenditure control guidelines contained in Section 4.1.3.
- Departments may maintain a reasonable number of unassigned activated cellular telephones for use only in emergencies with appropriate security controls to prevent misuse.

#### **4.7.3 Reimbursement Policy**

County-issued cellular telephones and other wireless data devices should primarily be used for County business purposes. If an employee does use his/her County-issued device(s) for personal purposes, and that usage results in additional charges to the County, the employee must reimburse the department for the actual cost incurred over the base plan.

- Flat Rate Plans - Flat rate plans charge a specified per-minute rate for all calls made from a cellular telephone. Per minute charges begin with the first minute used. Employees will reimburse the County for each personal call at the per-minute rate specified in the cellular telephone service agreement.
- Anytime Minutes Plans - Anytime Minutes Plans provide cellular telephone users with a specified number of minutes for a fixed monthly fee. The cellular telephone service provider bills each minute used above the specific number of minutes in

the Plan at a predetermined, per-minute rate. Under this Plan, employees are required to reimburse the County for personal calls only if the employee used more than the specified number of minutes in the Plan. If the employee used more than the specified number of minutes in the Plan, the employee must reimburse the County for the lesser of 1) all personal calls or 2) all additional minutes.

- **Shared/Pooled Plans** - For departments using shared/pooled minute plans, usage must be routinely analyzed to determine the appropriate number of minutes for each department's plan. The nature of these plans makes it difficult to establish equitable reimbursement guidelines for excess usage. Therefore, departments must ensure they actively monitor individual usage under these plans.
- **Data Plans** - Data plans provide users with a specified amount of data for a fixed monthly fee. The data service provider bills usage above the specific amount of data in the Plan at a predetermined, per-byte rate. Under this Plan, employees are required to reimburse the County for personal use only if the employee used more than the specified amount of data in the Plan due to personal use.

**Note:** If a Plan includes roaming charges, they are generally in addition to the base rate. Departments must ensure that all roaming charges related to a user's personal calls are identified and reimbursed by the employee.

The following is an example of reimbursement under an Anytime Minutes Plan:

Facts: Based on an analysis of the employee's cellular telephone needs, Department A assigned a cellular telephone with a 500 Anytime Minutes Plan to the employee. The fixed monthly fee is \$45 and the provider bills each additional minute used at 30 cents per minute.	
Minutes Used	Reimbursable Amount
The employee utilized 450 minutes in a monthly period.	No reimbursement is necessary because the number of minutes used (450) is less than the number of minutes in the plan.
The employee utilized 550 minutes in a monthly period. As the employee used 50 more minutes than included in the plan, the Department requires the employee to review the bill and identify personal calls. The employee reviewed the bill and identified 80 minutes of personal calls and 470 minutes of County-business calls.	The employee utilized 50 more minutes than were in the plan, which is less than the 80 minutes of personal calls he or she identified. Therefore, the employee reimburses the lesser amount of 50 minutes, at 30 cents per minute, or \$15.

<p>The employee utilized 550 minutes in a monthly period. As the employee used 50 more minutes than included in the plan, the Department requires the employee to review the bills and identify personal calls. The employee reviewed the bill and identified 40 minutes of personal calls and 510 minutes of County-business calls.</p>	<p>The employee utilized 50 more minutes than were in the plan, which is greater than the 40 minutes of personal calls he or she identified. Therefore, the employee reimburses the lesser amount of 40 minutes, at 30 cents per minute, or \$12.</p>
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Departments should consider assignment of a County cellular telephone or other wireless data device to an employee only when expected usage warrants. If usage is expected to be low, employees may use personal cell phones and receive reimbursement from their departments at a pre-determined rate.